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Montana State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee

MONTANA SOICC

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Helena, Montana 59624
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MONTANA SOICC NEWSLETTER

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

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What is Literacy?

What does it mean to be literate? There is no easy answer. Literacy is a complex concept, defined in a myriad of ways. Some often used definitions include the following:

- **Functional literacy** -- the ability to read and write well enough to function in society; also called "real world" or "survival" literacy.
- **Aliteracy** -- having the ability to read but choosing not to.
- **Cultural literacy** -- refers to the vast background knowledge that members of a given culture are assumed to possess.
- **Technical literacy** -- usually refers to computer competence; may also include "quantitative" or "scientific" literacy.
- **Critical literacy** -- the ability to read between the lines and beyond the words; to ask while reading, "Who wrote this and why?"

The Numbers Game

How many people are illiterate? Current estimates of illiteracy in the United States vary widely--from one million to 78 million. Why the variation? Simply, how literacy is measured. Different ways of measuring literacy yield different numbers for illiteracy.

Changing Views of Literacy

"Literacy is a moving target." As societies change, their concepts of literacy also change. Yesterday's literacy is today's illiteracy. The critical question is, what will it take to be literate in the future?

The Local Picture

What is the extent of the literacy problem in Montana? Compared to the rest of the nation, we're doing well. Montana has:

- an 8% illiteracy rate
- an 87.2% high school completion rate
- the fourth highest literacy rate in the nation
- the sixth highest high school graduation rate

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There is still room for improvement. Montana also has.

- 63,000 people who are illiterate
- a 13% high school dropout rate

Who is threatened by illiteracy?

We know two things. First, illiterate people come from all walks of life. No age group, culture, or socioeconomic stratum is immune. Illiteracy crosses all societal boundaries.

Second, certain groups are more at risk than others. Illiteracy most threatens the disadvantaged: the undereducated, the unemployed, the poor. Minority group members are more at risk than majority group members. Those who speak English as a second language are more at risk than those who speak English as a native language. So, while illiteracy crosses all societal boundaries, it crosses some boundaries more often than others.

What are the connections between low income, unemployment, inadequate education, and illiteracy?

- The poor are often unemployed.
    - The unemployed are often undereducated.
        - The undereducated are often illiterate.

Pieces of the Puzzle

Behind every statistic on education, employment and income lies a related but unspoken statistic on literacy.

Educational Attainment:

Of Montanans over age 25:

- 1.3% completed 0 to 4 years of elementary school (6,043 individuals)
- 12.9% completed 5 to 8 years of elementary school (58,290 individuals)
- 11.3% completed 1 to 3 years of high school (51,001 individuals)
- 38% have completed 4 years of high school (171,109 individuals)

Adult Basic Education (ABE):

There are 130,802 Montanans eligible for ABE classes. Of those eligible:

- 6,556 are age 16 to 19
- 124,246 are age 20 and over
- 5,517 (4.2%) enrolled in ABE classes in 1987

Language:

A language other than English is spoken at home for 5.2% of Montanans over the age of 5 (37,392 individuals). Of these:

- 6.9% speak English poorly or not at all (2,573 individuals)
- 32.9% of those who speak English poorly or not at all are age 5 to 24

Unemployment Rates:

In 1988, 7.7% of Montana's labor force was unemployed. Of those Montanans unemployed in 1988:

- 17% were age 16 to 19 (4,062 individuals)
- 11% were age 20 to 24 (5,076 individuals)
- 7.8% were age 25 to 34 (9,542 individuals)
- 6% were age 35 to 44 (6,225 individuals)
- 6% were age 45 to 64 (6,311 individuals)

Poverty Level:

11.9% of Montanans live below poverty level (94,280 individuals). Of those Montanans living below the poverty level:

- 30.7% are under age 16 (28,944 individuals)
- 4.3% are age 16 to 17 (4,054 individuals)
- 11.2% are age 18 to 21 (10,559 individuals)

Current Literacy Efforts

What's being done to alleviate illiteracy in Montana? A number of efforts are in progress. These efforts include Project V.A.L. (Volunteers for Adult Literacy), the AFL-CIO's Project Challenge, the Montana welfare system's Project Work, and individual efforts through community colleges and libraries.

Roy Bartoo, a trainer for the Literacy Volunteers of America, says, "I could see Montana as being the first state to have less than a 5 percent literacy problem. The resource is there."

SOURCE: 1980 Census Report, Montana Office of Public Instruction, Montana Department of Labor and Industry

Most Americans Hold Jobs They Never Planned

A new survey has found that almost two-thirds of adult Americans would try to get more information about their career options if they could chart their career paths again, according to Juliette N. Lester, Executive Director of the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC).

The survey found that while whites show strong interest in more information, more African-Americans, Hispanics and young people age 18 to 25 say they would try to get more information about their job and career options if they could plan their worklife again.

Conducted for NOICC and the National Career Development Association (NCDA) by the Gallup Organization, **Work In America** focuses on a variety of issues concerning jobs, careers, and the workplace. This includes sources of job information, sources of help in finding jobs, job stability, job productivity and job discrimination.

"The findings of this survey point to a critical need by all Americans for information about jobs and careers," says Lester. "It is vital that we do all we can to see to it that people are aware of the available information, that the infor-

mation reaches wider audiences and that we help people use the information to make decisions about their participation in the labor force."

Among the findings last year, an estimated:

- 12.5 million U.S. adults needed help in finding or selecting a job
- 41 percent of working Americans followed a definite plan to map out their careers
- 30 percent got started by chance or took the only job available
- 23 percent were influenced in their career choice by family or friends
- 38 percent found job information in newspapers and magazines
- A majority of Americans believe that public high schools aren't doing enough to help non-college-bound youth gain job skills
- About half of Americans say job stress affects their health, personal relationships and ability to do their job
- Nearly one-third of the work force expects to change jobs within the next three years
- 65% said that given the chance to start over, they would try to get more information about career options

The results indicate "that many people are trapped at less than they could do," said Sharon Dannan, research director at a Cleveland-based group called 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women. "I don't think it bodes well. People aren't looking at their job as a lifelong development, as a way to grow. They're not dreaming of the stars."

Jim Green, a labor historian at the University of Massachusetts, says "There's a real dilemma. The labor market isn't matching up well with what people are trained to do and what they want to do." He said the results may indicate that many people view their jobs as "necessary evils."

Dannan and Green said part of the reason people are in jobs they never planned is because most new jobs being created are in the service industry. "Those are dead-end, no-where jobs. That's the opposite of what we need right now."

SOURCE: NOICC Press Release, January 11, 1990; **Missoulian**, January 12, 1990

NONTRADITIONAL CAREERS

Every occupation has advantages and disadvantages. Some occupations are easy to get into while others require more preparation and are more competitive. Nontraditional occupations present advantages that might not be available to you in a more traditional occupation. However, you may run into obstacles while preparing for, securing, and performing in a nontraditional occupation. Being aware of these potential obstacles is the first step to overcoming them.

Generally, women choosing a nontraditional occupation over a traditional one can anticipate a higher income, better advancement opportunities and fringe benefits, receiving the appropriate wages and job title for the work you are actually performing, and personal job satisfaction.

A nontraditional career might appeal to a man because often these jobs are in service areas which suffer less from economic fluctuations, offering more stability. Also these occupations may require less training and physical stamina. By not being bound by traditional occupational concepts, you can find real job satisfaction.

SOURCE: **Examine Your Options**, published by KANSAS CAREERS, Manhattan, Kansas, 1988

OUTLOOK
2000

OFFERED FOR FREE

A free occupational information resource? YES! A limited number of the latest "Occupational Outlook Quarterly **Outlook 2000**" are available from the SOICC **at no charge.**

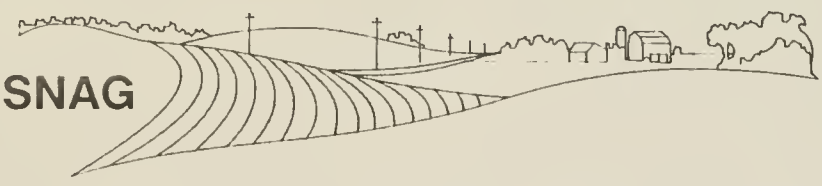
Every other year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics develops projections of the labor force, economic growth, industry employment, and occupational employment 10 to 15 years into the future. This issue of the **Quarterly** presents a graphic summary of projections for the 1988-2000 period.

The Bureau's projections are used in many activities, including planning programs in the wide variety of educational and training institutions found in this country, formulating policy by government agencies, and in market research and personnel planning by business organizations. Readers of the **Quarterly** are probably most familiar with their use in career guidance because the projections provide the statistical information behind the discussions of job opportunities in the **Occupational Outlook Handbook.** The information in the **Quarterly** provides users of the **Handbook** and other career guidance information with a background for discussions of the employment outlook in specific occupations and fields of work.

If you are interested in adding a copy of this publication to your library, please write to:

Montana SOICC
Outlook 2000
P.O. Box 1728
Helena, Montana 59624

FARMERS HIT JOB MARKET SNAG



Farmers are having trouble finding jobs off the farm, says the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service, and that trend will continue into the next century.

A report by Timothy Parker and Leslie Whitener in the USDA publication **Rural Development Perspective** says that the age of farmers who will be seeking off-farm employment--mostly between 45 and 64 years old--is older than nonfarmers who are looking for jobs. Seventy percent of the whole labor force is younger than 45 years old, the report says.

Farmers also are disadvantaged by slightly lower levels of education and the fact that farmers live in areas where unemployment is high. The article quotes labor force analysts as predicting that as many as 300,000 farmers may leave farming by he turn of the century, while many others will seek supplemental off-farm jobs to help them keep their land.

SOURCE: **Rural Montana**, Volume # 36, #13, October, 1989

IS YOUR CONCEPT OF

CAREER PLANNING

OUT OF DATE?

Attend the "Career Planning--A Lifelong Process" Conference, April 10 and 11, 1990 in Great Falls

Who should attend? School and job counselors, administrators, teachers, curriculum planners, principals, employers and everyone interested in career planning.

This conference will provide an opportunity for you to better assist your students or clients in making career decisions based on the realities of the labor market. You will:

- Understand why career development is a lifelong process
- Learn how occupational and educational information is used in a career information system
- Receive up-to-date information about Montana's economic and occupational future
- Gain information about career opportunities in the military
- Network with others interested in career counseling
- Learn to use the National Career Development Guidelines in your career counseling program
- Apply national and Montana occupational and labor market information to career planning

Highlights include:

- Dr. Cal Crow, Center for Career and Work-related Education, Northwest Cooperative Education Center, Des Moines, Washington
- Dr. Bruce McKinlay, Executive Director of the National Career Information System, Eugene, Oregon
- Dr. Paul Polzin, Director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana, Missoula
- Chuck Wagon Buffet sponsored by the Department of Defense

The conference is sponsored by the Montana State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC), the Montana Career Information System, the Montana Council on Vocational Education, the Military Entrance Processing Station, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

CONFERENCE DETAILS:

"Career Planning--A Lifelong Process" will be held at the Sheraton Great Falls, 400 - 10th Avenue South. The conference will begin at 9:30 a.m., April 10 and will last until noon, April 11.The registration fee before March 23, 1990 is $25. Registration after March 23 is $30. Your registration fee covers all conference activities including a banquet the evening of April 10.

The Sheraton is offering a conference rate for sleeping rooms of $39 single occupancy and $45 double occupancy. A block of rooms has been reserved for state employees at $24 single occupancy (state identification is required). If you need hotel rooms, you must make reservations at least two weeks before the conference. To get the conference rate, please indicate that you will be attending the "Career Development--A Lifelong Process" conference. Call the Sheraton at 800-626-8009 to make your reservations. You can also request a room reservation card from the Montana SOICC by checking the appropriate box on the registration form.

Participants will receive career and labor market information resources at the conference. These include a publication called "Using Labor Market Information in Career Exploration and Decision Making," and the latest "Occupational Outlook Quarterly **Outlook 2000**."

If you have questions about the conference, call the Montana SOICC at (800) 633-0229. We hope to see you there!

REGISTRATION FORM

☐ **YES, please register me for the "Career Planning--A Lifelong Process" conference at the Sheraton Great Falls, April 10 and 11, 1990.**

☐ **$25--registration before March 23, 1990**

☐ **$30--registration after March 23, 1990**

☐ Please send me a Guest Registration form for the Sheraton Great Falls.

☐ Check here if you are interested in a post-conference "case study" using labor market information. If there is enough interest, this session will be scheduled for the afternoon of April 11.

NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

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PHONE: _____

Please return your completed registration form and your check or money order made out to the Montana SOICC to:

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Montana SOICC Newsletter
Volume Seven - Number Four

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BULK RATE

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, contact the Montana SOICC at P.O. Box 1728, Helena, Montana 59624. The Montana SOICC reserves the right to edit all information submitted.

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If your address has changed, please indicate on this cover and return to the Montana SOICC.

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